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GRAMMYS

Star Gazing at  
Music's Biggest  
Night



THRUST



## Rock City Angels

Twenty-Three Years Later, The Band That Was Deep Inside Your Heart Wants to Destroy You

**PLUS:** Cee Lo Green and Gwyneth Paltrow, Dodos, Accept, Celedon Candy  
Christian Hard Rockers Scarlet and the Warren Brothers, Blonde Summer, and More!

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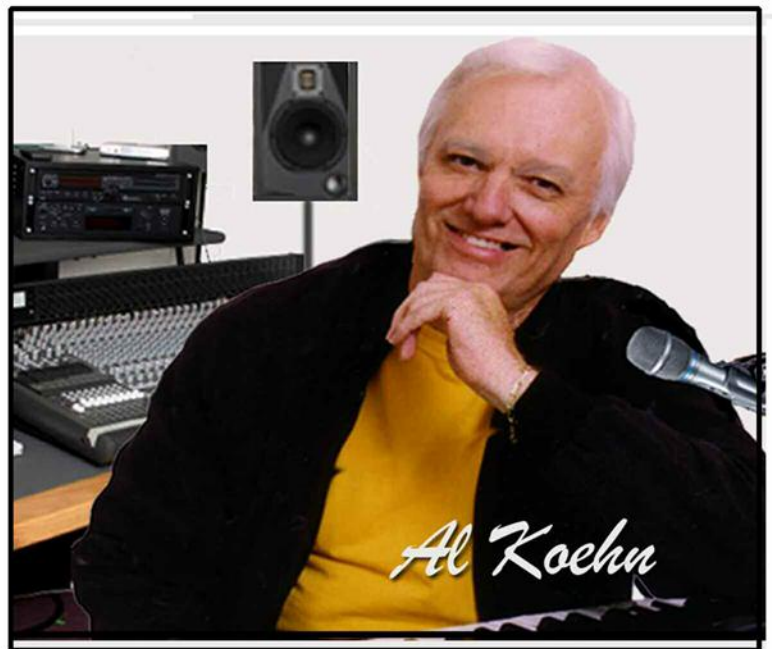
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### The Kids are Alright

**How I Learned to Stop Believing the Hype and Love the Rock City Angels**

In 1988, Rock City Angels seemed to have it all. Their debut album *Young Man's Blues* was released on Geffen records, their video for the song "Deep Inside My Heart" was in rotation on MTV, and they were on tour with rock legends Jimmy Page and Joan Jett. So why are they seemingly absent in the rock-n-roll history books? Check out our interview with Rock City Angels' singer Bobby Durango to find out the truth behind the hype.

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### Thrust Goes to the Grammys

**We Tell You What's it's Like to Experience Music's Biggest Night Among the Stars**

There's a whole lot more to the 53rd Annual Grammy Awards than what America saw on CBS-TV one Sunday night last month. *Thrust Magazine* Contributing Writer Marlowe B. West takes you inside the action at the Grammy's Pre-Telecast Awards Ceremony, the live Grammy Awards telecast, and then how Lady Gaga explained on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* her Grammy Awards entrance in a custom-made vessel that looked like an egg.



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### 24 California Surf Rock Returns ...and Blonde Summer is Riding The Wave

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### 28 The Last Word

Decades before Michael W. Smith and Mercy Me brought Christian music to the public, Christian hard rock and metal bands were already singing about how cool Jesus is. Learn what some of these pioneer's of Jesus-rock in the '80s and '90s are up to today in the secular world.

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*Thrust Magazine* Senior Photographer Christopher Lee Helton rocks you like a hurricane with another magic moment from his archives of rock-n-roll history. This month: Mathias Jabs, lead guitarist of the Scorpions, reminds readers of when—to be really cool—guitarists had to make faces at the camera and wear yellow- and black-striped spandex.

Thrust™ Magazine Online features the history of Thrust™ Magazine, archives of every issue from 1989-1993 and from 2010 onward.

Visit it at [www.thrustmagazine.org](http://www.thrustmagazine.org)



# Music's Biggest Night Brings in the Ratings



**Thrust™ Magazine Contributing Writer Marlowe B. West and Senior Editor Christopher R. Phillip were among those who witnessed the 53rd Annual Grammy Awards. This photo is at the pre-telecast awards. (Photograph by Thrust Contributing Editor Don Keefe.)**

**Location: Los Angeles**—The 53rd Annual Grammy Awards on Feb. 13, 2011, showcased an eclectic mix of musical performances and special segments that once again gave CBS and Grammy Sunday increased ratings with 26.7 million viewers (up from 25.8 million last year), and delivered the largest audience in more than a decade, as well as winning the night for the entire week. The 16 show-stopping, signature Grammy Moments showcased legends and newcomers throughout the three-and-a-half hour show.

Grammy Week events—including the annual MusiCares Person of the Year gala, Grammy Career Day, Special Merit Awards Ceremony, Nominees Reception, Clive Davis and The Recording Academy's Pre-Grammy Gala, Social Media Rock Stars Summit, and more—highlighted education, philanthropy, advocacy, diverse artists and musical genres, and set records with increased guests and media attendance. Aggressive social networking and marketing and a user-friendly redesign helped increase traffic to Grammy.com, and the "Grammy Effect" the week follow-

ing the show and resulted in significantly increased album sales and digital song downloads for performers and Grammy-winning artists. Additionally, The Recording Academy furthered its efforts to present a greener Grammy Awards by once again reducing the environmental impact of the telecast and associated Grammy Week events.

## Grammy Pre-Telecast

The Grammy Pre-Telecast—during which awards for a majority of the 108 categories were presented—took place at the Los Angeles Convention Center prior to the telecast and enjoyed its largest attendance to date. Once again the ceremony was streamed live on Grammy.com and the stream was available for 30 days following the event. The Pre-Telecast live stream was viewed by more than 460,000 visitors, a 130-percent increase over last year. The ceremony was co-hosted by Bobby McFerrin and Esperanza Spalding and featured live performances by Choc-QuibTown, Buddy Guy, Cyndi Lauper, Maria Muldaur, Kenny Wayne Shepherd, Mavis Staples,

Trombone Shorty, Kirk Whalum, and Betty Wright. Grammy Awards were presented by Laurie Anderson, Sara Bareilles, BT, and Wayne Wallace. Overall, Grammys in 46 out of 108 categories this year were awarded to independent artists and/or music released on an independent label.

## Grammy Awards Performers And Presenters

Building on the stunning opening tribute to Aretha Franklin featuring Yolanda Adams, Christina Aguilera, Jennifer Hudson, Martina McBride, and Florence Welch, many other great Grammy Moments followed on this year's telecast, including Arcade Fire; Dr. Dre, Skylar Grey and Adam Levine; Lady Antebellum; Lady Gaga; Miranda Lambert; Muse; Katy Perry; Cee Lo Green with Gwyneth Paltrow; Mick Jagger with Raphael Saadiq; Esperanza Spalding in a special segment with members of the Grammy Jazz Ensembles and Grammy Camp; Justin Bieber and Usher; B.o.B, Bruno Mars and Janelle Monáe; and Drake and Rihanna. Presenters included Marc Anthony, Dierks Bentley, Zac Brown, Miley Cyrus, Jamie Foxx, Se-

lena Gomez, Neil Patrick Harris, Jewel, Norah Jones, Kris Kristofferson, John Legend, LL COOL J, Eva Longoria, Jennifer Lopez, Ricky Martin, Clay Matthews, John Mayer, Nicki Minaj, Matthew Morrison, Paramore, Pauley Perrette, Seth Rogen, Ryan Seacrest, Blake Shelton, Keith Urban, Donnie Wahlberg, and will.i.am.

## Grammy Celebration

The party continued immediately following the live Grammy telecast at the Los Angeles Convention Center with the largest-ever guest attendance at this year's 2011 Grammy Celebration. The Academy's official after-party. Live performances included Keri Hilson, the Roots, DJ Wayne, and members of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra and the Grammy Jazz Ensembles. Chef extraterrestriality Puck treated guests to gourmet dishes and sweet delights throughout the three-and-a-half-hour party. The exclusive invitation-only soiree took guests back to the '70s with a journey through a Night at Studio 54 and was one of the night's most sought-after parties.



## Attention

Record labels, managers, promoters, bands, musicians, and other music industry professionals. Do you want to see your news item in Thrust™ Magazine? Put us on your press release email list or send us an email to [email@thrustmagazine.org](mailto:email@thrustmagazine.org)

## X Japan to Donate Auction Proceeds to Help Victims of Earthquake

**Location: Tokyo**—On March 11, 2011, a devastating 9.0 earthquake struck off the northeast coast of Japan, creating tremors that rocked buildings as far away as Tokyo and triggering a 33-foot-high tsunami that swept inland as far as six miles. The tragedy touched the entire nation, including one of its most famous musicians, Yoshiki Hayashi, the founder of Japanese super-group X Japan.

Several hours after the initial quake, Hayashi wrote this haunting message on his Twitter feed:

"Trying to be calm ... but I still can't contact my mother..."

Fortunately all was well for Yoshiki and the rest of his band. "It took awhile to locate my mother, but she is, thankfully, OK, and I've spoken with [band members] Toshi, Pata, Sugizo, and Heath, and they are all safe as well," he says. "I am praying for the people here who are still trying to locate their family and friends."

Though he currently resides in Los Angeles, the Japanese-born Yoshiki was in Tokyo on business at the time of the disaster and was shocked as the scale of the devastation became apparent. (As of press time, the offi-

Plexi-glass instrument as the one that was used during the band's legendary performances in the Tokyo Dome.

Yoshiki is also collecting funds through the Yoshiki Foundation America, his California-based, non-profit, public-benefit corporation with tax-exempt status as a section 501(c). The foundation has already donated to American organizations such as the Make-A-Wish Foundation of America, the Grammy Foundation, and others. The Japanese branch of the Yoshiki Foundation has donated funds in the wake of other disasters, such as the 2009 earthquake in Sichuan, China.



cial toll is over 7,000 killed and over 10,000 missing, with approximately 500,000 people rendered homeless.)

In the face of such overwhelming need, Yoshiki has announced that he will be auctioning his signature *crystal* piano—the artist's favorite—and donating all of the proceeds to Japanese earthquake and tsunami relief efforts. Fans will recognize the custom-made,

In light of the tragedy, X Japan postponed the March 15, 2011, release of their single "Jade," in order to focus their energy on relief efforts. To learn how you can help, visit [www.yoshiki.foundation.com](http://www.yoshiki.foundation.com).—Thrust Magazine Contributing Writer Katherine Fulton



## Thin Lizzy's Gary Moore Remembered

**Location: Estepona, Spain**—On February 6, 2011, Gary Moore passed away quietly in his hotel room.

Moore was a legendary guitarist, and played with artists as varied as Albert King and The Traveling Wilburys. He led his own band since the early '70s, but was widely sought after as a sideman. Shortly after releasing his first solo album, *Grinding Stone*, in 1973, he was recruited by Thin Lizzy frontman Phil Lynott to replace a departing guitarist Eric Bell. Moore left within a year, but recorded three tracks with the band, most notably, "Still in Love with You."

Born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, Moore paid his dues in Irish rock bands Skid Row and other local bands before joining Thin Lizzy. Over the years he

would be a part of its line up on three separate occasions, and notably provided memorable leads on *Black Rose: A Rock Legend* closing-track "Róisín Dubh," a seven-minute medley of traditional Irish songs given a twin guitar attack that was the band's signature sound.

His collaborations with Lynott weren't limited to the band. Lynott added his vocals to "Parisienne Walkways," a song

from Moore's solo album, *Back on the Streets*. It went on to reach No. 8 in the U.K. singles chart in 1979.



Gary Moore, circa 2005. © LIVEPICT.COM

Moore was recognized as an influence by many notable guitarists including Vivian Campbell, John Sykes, and Kirk Hammett.

"I was very saddened to hear the news of Gary's death," Alex Lifeson, guitarist for Rush, was quoted on guitar website [www.truthinshredding.com](http://www.truthinshredding.com). "We toured

together in the '80s and I remember him as a soft-spoken, gentle man with a quick smile. His influence as a guitarist is undeniable and his purity of playing and passion will live on in all of us who love the instrument he so cherished."

Moore released 20 solo studio albums, had returned to his blues roots in recent years, and, in 2006, performed with former surviving bandmates from Thin Lizzy. Upon hearing the news of his death, the band's current lineup dedicated that evening's performance to his memory. Thin Lizzy founding member Brian Downey said, "I am in total shock. He will always be in my prayers and thoughts and I just can't believe he is gone."—Thrust Magazine Contributing Writer M. Alberto Rivera





# The Kids Are Alright

## How I Learned to Stop Believing the Hype and Love the Rock City Angels

Introduction by *Thrust Magazine* Senior Contributing Writer Blackie Paima. Q&A by *Thrust Magazine* Contributing Writer Eldiablo-Mainey.

Photographs courtesy of Rock City Angels

“If you were alive and kicking in '88-'89 and a fan of MTV and hard-rock radio, you may remember hearing or seeing the music video “Deep Inside My Heart,” the first single from *Young Man Blues*. Twenty-three years after its release, the album still has an authentic, timeless quality lacking in many other bands’ releases of the same period.”

What images comes to your mind when you hear the name *Rock City Angels*?

A street gang? A unified cause? How about a rock-n-roll band that wanted to get inside your heart in the '80s and is experiencing a rapid resurgence in their popularity, 23 years later?

Rock City Angels’ major-label debut release, *Young Man’s Blues*, earned them a strong army of fans worldwide. Just troll the Internet music chat sites and you’ll find a distinct theme to fans’ comments—“They were a great band.” “*Young Man’s Blues* was a record that was like no other at the time.” But with only a two-decade-old debut album to their credit until recently, how did Rock City Angels’ name and popularity live on?

While it’s true that Rock City Angels continued playing live for a short duration through its initial break-up in 1993, and no new material was released for many years, the band’s name and legacy never really went away. Take another quick lap around the Internet again and you’ll find no shortage of videos, information, articles, tales, rumors, and conspiracy theories about Rock City Angels. Depending on what site you land on, you can hear fact or fiction about the band’s auspicious beginnings in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in 1983, when

the band members were more punk than glam; how the band became more street-rough than pretty-boy; the record-label industry buzz that eventually led Geffen Records to the group; and how a then-fledgling, good-looking actor by the name of Johnny Depp joined the band as a guitarist, and then co-wrote a couple of songs, including “Mary,” which made the cut on the debut.

Continue mining the Internet sites and you’ll even hear blood-curdling tales of alleged death threats against employees of a competing record label and stories that the Angels’ career came to a grinding halt in Memphis so that their label mates Guns N’ Roses could flourish unchallenged. As Public Enemy stated so eloquently, “Don’t Believe the Hype!”

If you were alive and kicking in '88-'89 and a fan of MTV and hard-rock radio, you may remember hearing or seeing the music video “Deep Inside My Heart,” the first single from *Young Man’s Blues*. Truth be told, 1988 was not a year known for its soul, but the Angels had it—from the John Lee Hooker influence in the single to the spaghetti-western inspired “South of the Border,” which boiled up a whole lot of snarling, blues-based punk attitude spiced with a healthy dash of Stax-flavored soul on top. The band’s sound gained them attention, bookings on major tours, and the blessings of the rock media.

On the road with major artists—Jimmy Page and Joan Jett to name but a few—the album sold over 100,000 copies in the U.S., but overseas turned out to be the band’s biggest success. *Young Man’s Blues* went gold (a separate 100,000 copies) in Japan and sold well internationally. Considerably larger conquests were already on the horizon for the band; they just needed to get their follow-up album out to the masses. That was the plan, but as history shows, that’s not how things turned out.

As the saying goes, “There are three sides to every story—my side, your side, and the truth, and no one is lying.” Whether you place your bet on the bounty of break-up reasons birthed in the rumor mill or you accept Rock City Angels’ official explanation of why fame was fleeting, the band called it quits in 1993.

A generation after its release, *Young Man’s Blues* still has an authentic, timeless quality that transcends many other bands’ dated-sounding releases of the same period. Rock City Angels is true to this past, and still holds onto the street-cred sound of blues drizzled with soul and shaken up with some straight-on punk, as shown on the its DIY release of all new songs, *Use Once and Destroy* (2008). Bobby Durango still leads the band, and the current line-up includes guitarists Pagan Raygun and Jorge Hernandez, bassist Mark Binko, and drummer Adam Keller.



Rock City Angels, circa 2011. (L-R): Adam Keller, Bobby Durango, Mark Binko, Pagan Raygun, Jorge Hernandez. (Photograph by Vergentino Robles/vrobles.com)



“To blame the band for being a bunch of drinking, drug-ging, out-of-control [musicians] would be a bit disingenuous. That was understood going in. That being said, when it came to business, we were on it. We never missed a show [and] always performed a professional, engaging set, unlike some of our better-selling peers. And [we] consistently wrote interesting, timeless rock-n-roll—Bobby Durango”

In 2010, Nashville-based FNA Records released a compilation of never-before-heard-by-the-consumer studio cuts from what was to be the follow-up to *Young Man's Blues*. It was called *Midnight Confessions*, and is a must-have for every rock-n-roll discophile's collection. With a new record currently in pre-production, Rock City Angels have again shown up to the dance.

We'll be sure to cover Rock City Angel's upcoming opus in a future issue of *Thrust Magazine*. In the meanwhile, sit back, get in a reading mood, and learn about the band from the man who has steered its course since the beginning, Bobby Durango. He's used to hearing the question, "Whatever happened with the band?" and has heard all of the rumors. With his help, we'll put as many of them as we can to rest.

**THRUST MAGAZINE:** It's been a career of extremes, Bobby. At one point, there seemed little doubt that you had the world in your hands - but it spectacularly slipped through your fingers or was torn from your grasp. In hindsight, how do you feel about it all? Any regrets?

**BOBBY DURANGO:** When it comes to regrets, I'm rather philosophical. I'm a Buddhist, a set of ideals I firmly embraced in the wake of being dropped and quitting Geffen Records. So while it is human to have regrets, it's not especially healthy as regret can turn easily into obsession—What if I had done this? What if I'd said that? I've seen many former and current artists on that particular path, and it's not pretty. Were there mistakes made? Sure. But I know in my heart that I did the best I could, given my rather limited experience with immoral music execs and larcenous lawyers whose job it is to take advantage of the very same artists they've been hired to help out. Through it all I stayed true to myself, and the band, which had become an extension of me. That could end up [alienating] people, especially those attempting to control us. But that was my path, and I lived and learned.

In the process, we created a lasting work of art, a damn good album, and entertained thousands of people. Honestly, how could I regret that?

**THRUST:** The legend of the band's demise is well documented. Was the band as debauched as claimed or was the problem record-label politics?

**DURANGO:** To blame the band for being a bunch of drinking, drug-ging, out-of-control [musicians] would be a bit disingenuous. That was understood going in. That being said, when it came to business, we were on it. We never missed a show [and] always performed a professional, engaging set, unlike some of our better-selling peers. And [we] consis-

him when the crap hit the fan.

**THRUST:** From the outside looking in, it is difficult to understand what Geffen was actually doing. First, they bought you out of a small-label deal, but didn't pick up on the original album that was already recorded. Then they invested time, energy, and financial resources in you for recording *Young Man's Blues*, before doing the same for a follow-up album that they then didn't release.

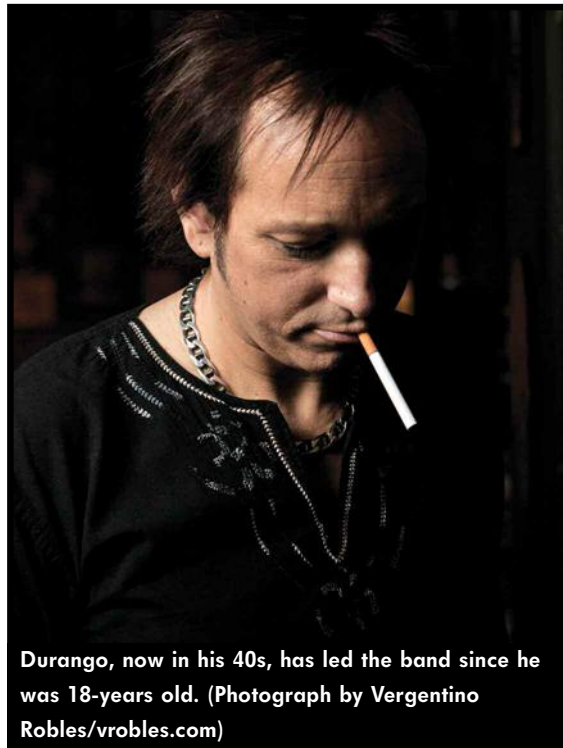
**DURANGO:** I can imagine how crazy it all looks from the outside. The truth is actually fairly straight forward, with far more grays than harsh black and whites.

Let's start with the glam album that Geffen bought out from New Renaissance for \$5,000. There's a story going around implying that when we got signed, Geffen turned around and buried this recording, demanding that we stop wearing make-up and cross-dressing, thus changing our glam image, and most important, changing our musical style. Nothing could be further from the truth. They would have loved us to have remained the same. In 1986 there were quite a few bands that fell into that Hanoi Rocks, neo-glam kind of sound and it would have been a whole lot easier to define and sell us as such a band.

I dug Hanoi, Smack, Dogs D'Amour and the early '70s bands like

Sweet, but we'd been making that kind of music since 1983. I, for one, was ready to move on to something different—a wild mix of all our influences—punk, blues, glam, soul, power pop, southern rock, and more. The target was an album of scope like *Exile On Main Street*. The glam album wasn't really an album at all, but more a series of cheap demos strung together that didn't fit this vision at all.

In their favor, Geffen Records gave us complete artistic control at first and were behind us 100-percent in changing direction. There were no significant disagreements until our producer Jim Dickinson turned his finished work



Durango, now in his 40s, has led the band since he was 18-years old. (Photograph by Vergentino Robles/vrobles.com)

tently wrote interesting, timeless rock-n-roll, as I think *Midnight Confessions*, our recent release on FNA Records, makes clear. This album is comprised of songs written and recorded for the never-released second Geffen disc.

Label politics made that [second] album an impossible dream. They can blame it on whatever they want, but the truth is that our A&R rep spent far too much label money on the first album in a gamble that it would sell so many records that it wouldn't matter. [The] problem was [that] he was gambling with our careers without any discussion with us. Our lifestyles were the perfect escape clause for

# Turning Back the Rock: Rock City Angels

in. Jim was an absolute genius at helping an artist find and achieve [his] ultimate vision. He knew I wanted Young Man's Blues to be a sprawling, epic musical statement without pretensions. We worked really hard in pre-production for three months before heading to the studio for another three months to bring it alive. When Geffen's A&R department heard it, they freaked out. The general consensus was that the record-buying public was too stupid to understand such a work and it needed to be dumbed down for mass consumption.

After all the time and energy that had been put into it, we were amazed by this idea. Then we got righteously [indignant]. We asked for the album to be released as-is. Our A&R rep said that Jim had to "fix it" first. As for Jim, he wasn't having any of this. As an artist himself, he refused to compromise, a lesson I never forgot. I was made to watch in horror as music executives with no experience went in to salvage the material by mixing it themselves! [However,] I had final approval. [I] mixed crappy, unimaginative mix after mix before engineer Joe Hardy and I were finally allowed to finish the album. By the time it was completed and approved, Rock City Angels had been in the studio for a whole year, leaving us way over budget, behind many other bands signed way after us, and in a poisoned relationship with our record label. [The band and Geffen] went through the motions for the next album but the damage had been done.

Before Jim died [producer Jim Dickinson died in 2009, following triple bypass heart surgery] he gave me a copy of his version of the album, as far as I know, the last copy in existence, and hoped that one day it might be released. I do my best to promote and sell this version on our various websites. It deserves to be heard.

**THRUST:** You dropped off the radar after *Young Man's Blues*. It was around 2007, maybe a little later, before a few whispers—the follow-up CD to *Young Man's Blues* being finished and due for a 2008 release—began to surface.

**DURANGO:** All kinds of stuff went down after Rock City Angels disbanded in 1993. I kicked around L.A. for a while, writing a column for an underground paper, and [also] working with a director on a screenplay for

Propaganda Films. The film was to be a neo-noir, which was perfect for the cynical and dark frame of mind I was in at the time. I got even more depressed after I auditioned for a few bands that I liked, only to find that I now had a stigma attached to my name that kept folks away. Though I was writing and staying creative, this was a real dark period for me until a writer friend of mine, whom I respected greatly, turned me on to Gnosis and Buddhist thought through weekly classes.

My frame of mind gradually improved and I began to travel to San Francisco and New York City, where I lived with good friends like Circus of Power. On my return to L.A., I ran into a girl I knew from Memphis. [The] next thing I knew, I moved there and married [her]. I soon put together a Memphis supergroup called The 420 with members of Son of Slam, Gun Down Mary, and Mama Terra. Outside of Rock City Angels, this was one of my favorite bands. Guitarist Fred Thompson and I would get loaded and write dozens of songs in his attic until all hours of the morning. I really honed my guitar-playing skills at this time as well.

My percussive style of rhythm really inspired a lot of different styles of songwriting. The 420 was a strong outfit right into the year 2000 when we finally broke up [because of] overambitious musicians trying only to be "discovered." I was well over all that. Do-it-yourself was where my head was.

Not too long after, I joined a band called Hustler that was a little lower key but lots of fun. I found them through their bass player who I'd worked with in a reggae-punk band I started called Zebra Bug. Hustler and I worked up some fantastic songs, a few of which ended up on [Rock City Angels'] *Use Once And Destroy* after [Zebra Bug] broke up.

It was around this time that I noticed people [were] again showing interest in Rock City Angels. The only album available at this time was the demo that Anne Boleyn released through her label, New Renaissance. It was known as the Glam Album or Self-Titled. It was kind of embarrassing that this was the only thing representing the band and I decided it was time to show our growth as artists on [a new] album.

After a month [of] pre-production, we booked time in Paramount Recording Studios [in Hollywood] and laid down basic tracks, in 2001. The band consisted of previous members of Rock City Angels and Hustler. I planned to take these tracks back to Memphis and lay down legitimate Memphis horns and B3 organ. It took six more years of investors falling through and one calamity after another before I was able to hear my dream come to life.

**THRUST:** *Use Once and Destroy* has been released. It revisited a more punky sound than some would have expected, but my main surprise is how an album that took a big chunk of a decade to record can sound so fresh, and flow so well. How did you manage that?

**DURANGO:** I think the reason it sounds so fresh is the same reason people still respond to Young Man's Blues. The songs and the music [are] timeless and I worked very hard with my partner/engineer, Chris Swenson, on producing it in a way that doesn't sound produced. It is surprisingly difficult getting such a natural, unproduced sound that could come from any era.

I always looked at the album as a whole, not piece by piece. I was attempting to adhere to a theme and an overall sound with the songs working together to weave a loose story or idea. For the most part, I think it succeeded.

**THRUST:** Rock City Angels have been playing dates in the U.S. How is that going? Are you mainly getting older fans, or is a younger element starting to come out?

**DURANGO:** Yeah, our dates have been a blast. So far we've only toured the southern U.S. but that will be changing. Our audience is actually a combination of [old and young], plus folks that have never heard of us and end up becoming new fans, which is awesome. We work hard to give the audience a whole evening of great entertainment by playing with bands we really dig, not [joining a tour] just to fill a slot.

**THRUST:** What's next? Have you been working on new material?

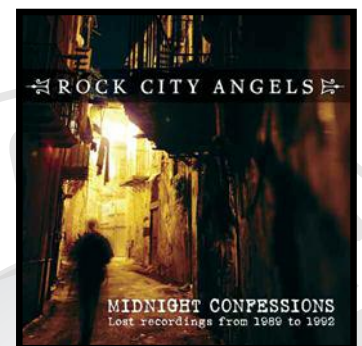
**DURANGO:** As a matter of fact, we are in the process of writing songs for a new album. We're aiming at an end-of-2011 release to tie into a Euro-

pean tour we are working on. That would be a real dream come true for me, as I haven't been overseas since we worked with Brian Robertson from Thin Lizzy in 1993. We have an incredible fan base in Spain and other countries and I can't wait to play for them, as many [of them] have waited years to see us live. Speaking of across the pond, you can catch "Heart and Soul," which we recorded in London, on our current release, *Midnight Confessions*.

Our new album is going to tackle the themes of vengeance and redemption and is going to be the biggest production challenge I've ever faced. There will be no limitations on instruments; we're going to use whatever we need. I think our audience is ready for the next step and I'm really excited by the prospect of a no-holds-barred approach to instrumentation and experimentation. It will be a wild ride for listeners for years to come, and the kind of timeless, dream-inducing music with raw blasts of energy that our fans have come to expect [from us.]

**THRUST:** Finally, if you could set down in stone what the next year was going to be like then how would it play out?

**DURANGO:** We've pretty much covered the plans and expectations I have, but like anything else in the music industry, it's a crapshoot. Anything can happen and often does, so we'll just have to see how it all plays out. I'm really excited by all the things happening around the band's comeback, and new and old friends of Rock City Angels make all the [obstacles] worthwhile. This cat here ain't gonna stop making a racket 'till they do.



For more information on Rock City Angels, including how to purchase the Jim Dickinson-produced mix of *Young Man's Blues*, visit the band's official website at [www.therockcityangels.com](http://www.therockcityangels.com).



# Thrust Goes to the Grammys

The 53rd Annual Grammy Awards Saw the Stars Shine

By *Thrust Magazine* Contributing Writer Marlowe B. West



Thrust Contributing Writer Marlowe B West, Anne Haines, Thrust Contributing Editor Don Keefe, and Thrust Assistant to the Publisher Huong Phillips made it to the 53rd Annual Grammy Awards' red carpet minutes before Lady Gaga made her appearance. (Photograph by Thrust Senior Editor Christopher R. Phillip.)

This was where the mortals and the immortals of the music industry mingled for four timeless hours in private secrecy. I love a parade, and this one had slender, and not so slender, goddesses in their hard-to-walk-in, skintight, trailing gowns forming a catwalk of push-up lingerie and suicidal spiked heels. The energy was crackling. Sizzling. It was to die for.

Ladies and gentlemen and children of all ages, you may know me by now. I am Marlowe B. West, your ringleader. I am highly honored to have just been given the privilege to welcome you all to our coverage of the biggest musical Big Top of all—the Grammy Awards.

It all began as a simple favor for a friend who directed Mr. Christopher R. Phillip my way. Chris, for those who do not already know, is the founder, creator, and senior editor of *Thrust*, this exciting rock-n-roll magazine. He was finishing up and editing the extensive research he had done on a fantastic article for the November 2010 issue. I sent him a moving personal account on the subject matter, along with rare photographs. He enjoyed my response and immediately invited me into his SS Thrust crew. Full steam ahead. The rest is history.

Chris was pleasantly taken aback when I quickly submitted to him one heck of a gem of a rock-n-roll story for my very first official *Thrust Magazine* column, which was published in the January 2011 issue. In his usual confident manner he informed me, "February will be an even tighter squeeze because, as part of our duties to the magazine, my wife and I are going to California for the Grammys. Are you not going to the Grammys, Marlowe?"

I had always daydreamed about going to the Grammys. Yet, I thought you had to go through all the challenges dumped in your path to success in the music business and finally, maybe, one day, if you were really very good, and met the right people, and got lucky, you might get an invitation.

Chris knew I had recorded back-up vocal tracks with Eddie Kramer at Electric Ladyland Studios in New York City and proceeded to get my credentials in order for me to become a Recording Academy member. Meanwhile he said, "My wife and I would be happy if you could join us at the event, and write about it for *Thrust Magazine* readers. By next year you should have your application in to become a member of the Academy."

In a radiant mist, all other thoughts drifted from my mind. I was weightlessly lifted and set on cloud nine. The world left behind had never been mine. I stepped up and refuse to ever again step down.

Come one. Come all. Join us now. We are graciously inviting you to climb on board as *Thrust Magazine* goes to the Grammys!

Chris, his new wife Huong, and I met in a sunburst at Los Angeles' famed LAX airport. There is nothing more ecstatic and joyful than young love. That, combined with my euphoric state of bliss, set us right on target. Everything opened up before us, golden and warm, pre-destined by those in control of the universe. Chris had also invited another beaming couple, Don (a contributing editor to this magazine) and Ann, his partner, to attend the show with us.

The 53rd Annual Grammy Awards took place on Sunday, February 13th, 2011, 8 p.m. ET/PT at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, but the event actually began at 1:00 p.m. in Los Angeles, at the Los Angeles Convention Center, where the pre-telecast awards were presented. This private soiree was divided into two sections—a central gathering area for stars to mingle and a theater where the vast majority of the Grammy Awards—all but the biggest ones of the year—were presented.

In the gathering area, the ceilings were so high that you had to crane your neck to see where the breezy, billowing, mile-long sheer draperies were hanging from. The setting seemed boundless. If there were walls somewhere, they were not for me today as I was already on my own cloud.

This was where the mortals and the immortals of the music industry mingled for four timeless hours in private secrecy. I love a parade, and this one had slender, and not so slender, goddesses in their hard-to-walk-in, skintight, trailing gowns forming a catwalk of push-up lingerie and suicidal spiked heels. The energy was crackling. Sizzling. It was to die for.

The euphoria was contagious. I was among the chosen to live this thrilling experience.

Hidden within the crowd in this outer vestibule, lovely and tall glass vases presented the most exquisite and exotic flowers, which posed as centerpieces to an endless array of tasty gourmet treats to try. I washed the one-biters down with bottled spring water, while others lined at floating bars in white gauzy linens for their inebriation. To get really high, though, all you had to do was remember that you, and everybody around you, were stars.

Within the theater, a scheduled pro-



Thrust staffers Huong and Chris take a minute from covering the Grammy pre-telecast awards ceremony. (Photograph by the author.)



Christopher Tin appeared on the front cover of *Thrust Magazine* in November 2011 and took home two Grammys last month. Congratulations, Chris. (Photograph courtesy of Christopher Tin.)

cession of award categories and nominees shuffled past the video screens. Among the set of hopefuls in each category, one was declared the Grammy Award winner and a house band provided the entrance music to his, her, or their arrival to the stage. The artists who would perform for the telecast later in the evening were rehearsing and could not rush to the podium to hold the Grammy in their hands and present their thank-you memoirs, nonetheless the theater was chock full of mega-stars. You do not even realize whom you may be sitting next to, as I noted when new country-music superstar Miranda Lambert politely sat one row right in front of me.

Though each award to each winner meant the world to him, her, or them, and rightfully so, *Thrust Magazine* wants to call out one category from the pre-telecast awards ceremony that brought the crowd onto their feet. It occurred when 97-year-old Mississippi bluesman Pinetop Perkins and his bandmate blues-drummer Willie "Big Eyes" Smith slowly made their way to the stage to accept the Grammy for Best Traditional Blues Album (*Joined At The Hip*). The crowd was an atomic bomb of applause when the venerable Perkins told the crowd, "Thank you." He was the oldest Grammy Award winner at the 2011 event.

I also want to recognize *Thrust Magazine* cover-feature artist Christopher Tin. *Thrust's* Senior Editor called Tin on his cell phone and congratulated him for winning not one, but two Grammy Awards—Best Classical Crossover Album (*Calling All Dawns*) and Best Instrumental Arrangement Accompanying Vocalists ("Baba Yetu"). In an impromptu interview, Tin told him, "It's been completely overwhelming, and I'm really grateful to the Recording Academy for bestowing me with these honors. Thanks to *Thrust Magazine*, too, for featuring me in its November 2010 issue."

I had made some bets that no matter how many people were going to be there, I would be easily recognized because of what I would be wearing. I had no idea there would be 18,000 people to compete against. At any rate, I was not going to be mistaken as an usher in a tux. No sir. Not I. No way. Solid black sequins spangling my top hat, bolero





You never know what will happen at the Grammy Awards, like taking a walk on the wild side with the Velvet Underground's Lou Reed.

jacket, and up and down the sides of my trousers sparkled in stark contrast to the white satin shirt and tie I wore. Was I ever kicking it in black, patent-leather boots. Man, oh man, glam rock slams and shocks!

Now where is my girl? Lady Gaga! I love her! This was all about her to me. I was trying to catch Cyndi Lauper, too. What a doll! No dice! But I did take a walk on the wild side and met Lou Reed. It was such a perfect day.

The *Thrust Magazine* writers and support staff had very little time to shuttle from the L.A. Convention Center to its next-door neighbor, The Staples Center, where the live telecast was counting down to its broadcast. In less than a half-hour, we had to pass through airport-tight security, mingle with ushers just long enough to get our official 2011 Grammy Awards programs, ride the Staples Center's escalator into the heavens, and then be escorted to our view for the next 3½ hours.

With mounting enthusiasm, the sensual feast of sight and sound was about to start. The director's count-down (unheard by TV audiences) grew into a cacophony as Grammy members and their guests cheered, howled, and screamed the seconds down to zero, and then millions of television viewers tuned in to CBS-TV to watch the Grammy Awards live.

The Recording Academy showed us a night about to explode. May I have the envelope, please?

The Grammy Award for Album of the Year went to *The Suburbs* by Arcade Fire. Lady Antebellum took Record of the Year with the song, "Need You Now."

There were surprises too. Everybody was sure to the second that teeny-bopper Justin Bieber had Best New Artist in the bag. Large portions of the American population are either die-hard fans of the Beebs or they are somehow directly affected by the heart-fluttering little ones who are. But remember, Grammy Awards are not given out for popularity. They are bestowed to the artists who the majority of voting Grammy members feel deserve the highest peer recognition. The Staples Center audience jolted when he lost his nomination to the vibrant Esperanza Spalding.

Lady Antebellum won another Grammy for Song of the Year with "Need You Now."

Lady Gaga, slipped and said the S-word when the Grammy Awards announced she had won Pop Vocal Album for *The Fame Monster*. It was probably bleeped out for TV. She could not be denied Best Female Pop Vocal Performance either for her killer hit from the same album, "Bad Romance."

Herbie Hancock's *The Imagine Project* grabbed the award for Pop Collaboration With Vocals, which included artistic contributions from Pink, India.Arie, Seal, Konono No 1, Jeff Beck, and Oumou Sangare. It wasn't Jeff Beck's only time to the podium. He scooped up two additional Grammys—Best Rock Instrumental Performance ("Hammerhead") and Best Pop Instrumental Performance for "Nessun Dorma," both from his *Emotion & Commotion*.

Cee Lo Green won Best Urban/Alternative Performance for "the song otherwise known as 'Forget You,'" as it was announced. The more well-known name of the song is offensive, true, but as the soulful singer who brought us "Crazy," a couple years back puts it, "What else do you say to a chick who dumps you for a guy with more money?" I love it!

Miranda Lambert, who my eyes had met earlier, won Female Country Vocal Performance. Male Country Vocal Performance was happily accepted by Keith Urban for "Til Summer Comes Around," although, in my opinion, Nicole Kidman, on his arm, stole the spotlight.

I will say that Chris sure does know true talent. You have got to read *Thrust Magazine's* December 2011 cover story, which he personally picked—a look at rising star Bruno Mars, written by fellow *Thrust Maga-*

zine contributing writer Katherine Fulton. When the young man hit the stage, my jaw dropped. Mars took Best Male Pop Vocal Performance with "Just The Way You Are," from his debut *E.P. Doo-Wops & Hooligans*.

Mick Jagger—certainly not a young man any longer—struck me the same way when he surprisingly burst onstage. He was just so generous spilling over with youth, and beautiful to behold. All in all, I felt electrified like I had mainlined the zenith.

The seismic force of the Grammys shook us well into the next day when we sat in *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* audience to watch Lady Gaga explain her Grammy Awards performance entrance in a custom egg vessel, designed expressly for her by Hussein Chalayan. This was a superior Valentine's moment for me. I was sitting in the audience only fifteen feet before her. At one point during a commercial she looked directly into my eyes. Our stares locked for maybe 15 drop-dead seconds, and then I turned into a wine-colored satin puddle. Even my wine-colored top hat sunk. To me, she was the epitome of the term *divine*.

For a list of all the 2011 Grammy Award winners, visit [www.grammy.com](http://www.grammy.com).

Happy landing *Thrust Magazine* readers and cheers, by the way.—Marlowe B. West



Justin Bieber, who if you haven't heard of him, your kids certainly have, was the youngest Grammy nominee this past year and the second-youngest performer at his year's Awards. He was 16 years old. (Photo Courtesy of The Recording Academy(r) /Wireimage.com (c) 2011)









# THRUST

**March 2011 Centerfold  
Cee Lo Green and Gwyneth Paltrow  
53rd Annual Grammy Awards  
Los Angeles, California  
February 2011**

Photo Courtesy of The Recording Academy(r) /Wireimage.com (c) 2011



# The Do's and Don'ts of the Dodos

# Far From Extinction

by Thrust Magazine Contributing  
Writer Katherine Fulton

"It's sort of an accident of how things come together," Meric Long muses. He's calling in from the West Coast, and he's thoughtful as he ponders the question posed to him—did his band's sound come about because of careful planning or a happy accident?

"I don't really know where things come from; it's not on purpose," he continues, chuckling a bit as he speaks. "But I think that's sort of representative of how my brain picks up on things. I'm not really organized enough to do things on purpose—it just sort of happened recklessly."

It's an odd choice of words. Long's San Francisco-based band the Dodos bases its sound on a broad range of styles, but "haphazard" is not something that comes to mind when describing it. Instead, Long's vocals and intricate guitar work, combined with drummer Logan Kroeber's innovative rhythms, creates music that is tight and detailed, albeit with a playful streak that keeps things from sounding repetitive and dull. The duo's synergy makes it work, but there's more to their partnership than mere luck. Much of it has to do with shared experiences and mutual goals. There's also a little bit of madness involved, or at least there was when the group recorded its new album, *No Color*.

On the surface, a collaboration between Long and Kroeber seemed like a long shot when the two of them were working on separate ends of the musical spectrum back in 2006. Long was a solo singer-songwriter at the time, while Kroeber was honing his craft as a metal drummer. The two were introduced through a mutual acquaintance and soon realized that they were not so far apart artistically.

"In print, the influences seem very different," says Long. "But the point at which we come together or come from the same background is that we both grew up listening to heavy '90s bands. Even though he was playing in a metal band at the time and I was doing acoustic finger-picking stuff, the moment at which we realized that we were in lock step was when we would be playing heavier stuff."

“Long’s vocals and intricate guitar work, combined with drummer Logan Kroeber’s innovative rhythms, creates music that is tight and detailed, albeit with a playful streak that keeps things from sounding repetitive and dull. The duo’s synergy makes it work, but there’s more to their partnership than mere luck. Much of it has to do with shared experiences and mutual goals. There’s also a little bit of madness involved – or at least there was when the group recorded its new album, *No Color*.”

We were just using what we had—he had a couple of toms, and I had an acoustic guitar—but in essence we were still playing like we were 16 years old and in the suburbs, listening to Tool or whatever.”

Another element that played a vital role in the development of the Dodos’ music came from an unlikely source, according to Long. “Vocally, I think there are a lot of bands that I grew up listening to, and then I forgot that I ever listened to them. It’s not until later when I started recording and listening back to what I recorded that some of those earliest bands were some of the heaviest in influencing my sense of melody,” he says. “In particular, with vocal melodies, I think there’s a lot of OMD (Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark) and Erasure and ’80s synth-pop bands that I draw from. That’s just because, in terms of having melodies in my head, when I was younger those were the ones that kind of stuck with me. But it’s like everything is kind of separate. For vocals, I focused heavily on that sort of sound, but for guitar I focused more on ’90s heavy bands mixed with some of the older, finger-picking blues stuff. It’s a mix and match.”

The two worked together to refine their sound and released their first album, *Beware of the Maniacs*, independently in 2006. Their second album, *Visiter*, was released two years later. It received praise from critics in both the U.S. and the U.K., and it also marked the second time they would work with producer John Askew. While Askew didn’t lend his skills to the Dodos’ 2009-release *Time to Die*, he would return for the band’s new album, *No Color*. He wasn’t the only one to lend his talents; attentive listeners will hear Neko Case singing along with Long on several tracks.

“We did a tour with [Neko’s] band, the New Pornographers, over the summer,” says Long. “She came out and did a couple of songs with us on a few nights, and I just asked her if she’d come and record. She was totally down with it. That’s how that came about.”

Long says that the recording sessions for *No Color* took place over

the course of two months and reunited the band with Askew, who helped the band through what Long describes as a particularly intense and emotionally trying.

“It was a mixture of the happiest I’ve been in a long time, working 12 to 14 hours a day on a record, but also completely losing our minds, because we were really doing it ourselves with John, our producer,” he says. “He really has his own style. It’s like he’s in the band. Together, between John, Logan, and I, we collectively lost our minds and spent way too much time on this record. It was probably a record we could have done in two weeks, to be honest, but we just slaved over every little decision.”

The album that emerged from those two months is a signature Dodos work, once again bringing together the disparate influences that forms the core of the band’s sound. A few elements, however, have changed—Case’s vocals and the addition of an electric guitar on some tracks, for example—but for all that, the heart of Long and Kroeber’s sound remains the same. That’s fine by Long.

“We’ve always been kind of a band that’s doing the same thing over and over again,” he says. “There have been slight augmentations [on other albums], in terms of bringing in the vibraphone and using other instruments or an orchestra. In this case, on this record, there was a lot of electric guitar, which is something new for me. I don’t think it stands out as much for the listener as it might for us, but that was the shift.”

“In terms of [growth], we had this idea for a sound in the beginning when we started this band, and we’ve always been trying to get closer and closer to it on each subsequent record,” he continues. “This is our third record with John, and each time it’s been us trying to figure out how to record this band in a way that showcases this particular sound. I think on this record, it gets the closest to it that it has.”

The result is a vibrant album, one that seems to stand in opposition to its title. Long explains that the

name *No Color* came from Kroeber, who told Long in a conversation that he mentally color-coded songs from their previous albums when they were played live. However, the songs they were recording for the new album did not yet have colors assigned to them. Instead, they seemed to be represented by “a bleak, grey, ashy nothingness,” says Long, though he is quick to explain that the description does not represent the feeling of the songs themselves.

Kroeber’s perspective did more than inspire the name of the album, however. Upon hearing the drummer’s description, Long turned to his roommate at the time, who took overexposed photos of soil and natural environments, and asked him to provide the cover art.

Fans will be able to experience all of the creative synergy of *No Color* because it was released this month. Long hopes that people will enjoy his songs, but he also hopes they find something else within its tunes.

“I guess what I want people to walk away with is understanding the band and understanding where we’re coming from,” he says. “We’re using other instruments, and while I’m primarily focused on using this style of acoustic guitar and Logan has this weird drum kit, we’re basically just playing heavy pop music. When we’re playing and performing, we’re going back to being teenagers in our room trying to copy records that we’re listening to. That’s the fun aspect of the music that I want people to enjoy.”



For more information on the Dodos, visit its official website at [www.thedodosmusic.net](http://www.thedodosmusic.net).







Celadon Candy is Jay Bowden and Paul Allgood. (Photograph by Jeff Sandhofer)

# Underground Success

by *Thrust Magazine* Contributing Writer Katherine Fulton

## Durham, NC's Celadon Candy Finds its Sound, and Then Finds its Fans. Will it Find Fame in 2011?

Durham, North Carolina, is known for its history, its universities, and its vibrant arts and entertainment scene. Residents and visitors alike can enjoy art exhibitions, symphony concerts, theater performances, and festivals celebrating film, dance, jazz and blues. It's

an eclectic mix, but when it comes to popular music, one person says a specific style holds sway.

"Hip-hop tends to dominate our city. 9th Wonder would be a big example of what epitomizes the sound of Durham," says Paul Allgood, one half of the Durham synth-pop group

Celadon Candy (The word *celadon* is a particular shade of green used in glazing.), referring to the hip-hop performer and producer. "Bands that share our sound are rare, though there are a scant few."

What is that sound? Allgood describes Celadon Candy as being

pop-driven, but also having a darker, driven edge that gives the band's work a "subversive" electronic-pop vibe. It's a formula that has helped him and fellow member Jason Bowden win over area fans, but it wouldn't have come about if Allgood's other band hadn't fallen apart.



“Celadon Candy released their first EP, *cc:*, in October 2010. The result was a sound that combines danceable beats, catchy pop melodies and a touch of industrial sensibility. People may hear traces of Skinny Puppy, Depeche Mode and Soft Cell; it has the air of something from London or New York, rather than what would be expected from a city in North Carolina.”

Neither member of Celadon Candy is originally from Durham, but they do have roots in music. Allgood grew up listening to British pop music, which left an indelible impression. “Growing up, U.K. pop was a strong influence on me,” he says. “I’ll say it wasn’t one particular artist, but that entire class of British new wave and dance music.”

“Music is something I have been deeply passionate about all of my life,” he continues. “I liked synth-pop because creatively it allows for a more intimate atmosphere. If you consider the two-member groups Soft Cell or Naked Eyes, for instance, they really had to trust each other to create something. There is nowhere to hide. In big giant bands people tend to take refuge in gaudy instrumentation.”

Flashy, dense music wasn’t an issue with Wedlock, Allgood’s previous group. However, band chemistry was. “Jay and I had known each other since 2008 while in Wedlock, and there were some band-chemistry issues, but not between him and me,” he says. We recorded the album *Continuity* in 2009. Flash forward to 2010 for our final-released EP, *Witnesses*, and I wasn’t happy with our direction. That line up had run its course.”

Wedlock eventually went on hiatus in 2010 due to the creative differences that plagued it, but not

before Bowden remixed “Still Unsatisfied,” and “Reverend Charisma,” two of the band’s singles from their 2008-album *Exogamy*. Allgood was impressed, and he realized that his former bandmate could help him find the sound he was looking for. “They were brilliant remixes,” he says. “I wanted to get back with Jay because he’s got loads of talent, and I feel he understands where I am coming from musically.” The duo clicked, and Celadon Candy was born.

With only two people in the group, Allgood and Bowden found themselves sharing duties when it came to instruments, production and programming. Despite the extra work—or perhaps because of it—the duo found themselves achieving the musical synergy they had lacked in Wedlock, which allowed them to experiment with a darker, slightly harder edge to their music. When Celadon Candy released their first EP, *cc:*, in October 2010. The result was a sound that combines danceable beats, catchy pop melodies and a touch of industrial sensibility. People may hear traces of Skinny Puppy, Depeche Mode and Soft Cell; it has the air of something from London or New York, rather than what would be expected from a city in North Carolina. This sound attracted listeners, who soon became fans. These fans would later nominate Celadon

Candy for a Pride in the Arts Award for Favorite Group in 2010.

“Pride In The Arts is an organization that celebrates artistic achievement in the gay, lesbian, and transgender, and intergender communities. It’s run by Len Rogers based in Roanoke, Virginia,” says Allgood. “The nominations came about courtesy of a kind and loving fan base.”

Celadon Candy’s 2011 schedule is a busy one, and it may see them achieve even wider success. The duo is scheduled to tape a segment for a television show in New York City, and they will be releasing more music in the spring. They also plan to make promotional videos, play more shows and, with any luck, release a full-length album. They’re hoping their efforts will help them reach out to a wider audience that will enjoy their work both for its music and its message.

“Shared human experiences. Connectedness,” explains Allgood. “For the people who like the music, I always want them to feel like I am speaking to them, and even if I am singing about something more abstract, there’s hopefully still a bond. We’re just open to whatever is coming next.”

For more information on Celadon Candy, visit the band’s official website at [www.celadoncandy.com](http://www.celadoncandy.com).



Photograph by Jeff Sandhofer



# Do You Accept?



Photograph by Mark Tucker

by Thrust Magazine Contributing Writer M. Alberto Rivera

## Credited with the Birth of Speed Metal, Germany's Other Heavy-Metal Band Returns with *Blood of Nations*

**A**cept is Heavy Metal. They are at once retro, cutting edge, unflinchingly brutal and completely relevant. For over 30 years they have set a standard of intensity most other bands past, present and future, could only aspire to. This is a band that never looked to trends to see what their next move should be.

The credit for Accept's success belongs to core members guitarist Wolf Hoffman and bassist Peter Baltes, who have steered an unwavering course to play the most honest and powerful metal ever. Unknown to many of the band's fans, the group was formed in the mid-'70s in Germany, went through members, and had difficulty maintaining a stable line up. But by 1976, the group had finally found its footing with singer Udo Dirkschneider, Hoffman, and Baltes. Their 1979 self-titled album was released to little notice, but the raucous, scream-along single "I'm a Rebel," came along less than a year later, in 1980. It was straight forward, no nonsense, and a rock anthem, giving the group media attention and its first television appearances.

In 1981, the now-classic Accept sound—tighter songwriting, with an emphasis on quicker, more up-tempo rhythms, heavy, muted chords adorned by razor-sharp virtuoso guitar leads, and growling vocals that occasionally venture in to higher register—was born on the album, *Breaker*. Accept embarked on their first world tour as the opening act for well-established bands, giving the group its first significant fan exposure outside of Europe. By now, thanks to the constant cycle of touring and recording, the band had metamorphosed from a bunch of rowdy bar-room rockers into an unflappable and relentless hard-rock/metal machine.

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"Fast As a Shark," the lead track to 1982's *Restless and Wild*, is widely considered the birthplace of speed and thrash metal. Upon hearing the song's extreme double-bass assault, countless drummers set out to jump rope while wearing ankle weights, hoping to soon have the stamina and strength to be able to play at this unprecedented speed. Charlie Benatante, drummer for Anthrax, said of "Fast As a Shark" in a *Modern Drummer* interview, "It was the song that was used for auditions. If a drummer could play that, then he was in."

The rest of the album is filled with nine more tough-as-nail songs, including "Princess of the Dawn," "Demon's Night," and "Neon Nights," which also stand out on this classic metal disc. Accept's tour to support the album once again took them around the world.

The band released three more albums in the '80s—*Balls to the Wall*, *Metal Heart*, and *Russian Roulette*. All are considered by critics and fans to be some of the finest vinyl Accept ever recorded. By the end of the decade, the band was a household name, at least for homes that tuned into MTV. The group toured the globe extensively, and lived by their reputation as a live act not to be missed.

Despite Accept's success, Dirkschneider split from the band to pursue a solo career as U.D.O. If Accept's songwriting team held any even the faintest hint of animosity toward their former front man, they didn't let the public in on it. Instead, they wrote an entire album for him, which was released in 1987 as *Animal House*.

David Reece, an American, joined the band as its new lead singer in

“Fast As a Shark,” the lead track to 1982’s *Restless and Wild*, is widely considered the birthplace of speed and thrash metal. Upon hearing the song’s extreme double-bass assault, countless drummers set out to jump rope while wearing ankle weights, hoping to soon have the stamina and strength to be able to play at this unprecedented speed.”

1988 but his honeymoon with the band lasted one album, *Eat the Heat*, and the subsequent tour. Reece’s higher pitched yelps were in sharp contrast to Dirkschneider’s moodier vocals and overall the album was not well received.

There were other problems, too. Midway through the *Eat the Heat* tour, drummer Stefan Kaufmann suffered a serious back injury and sat out the remainder of the U.S. tour dates. Meanwhile, differences between the band and Reece had come to a head. By the end of 1989, Accept had hung it up.

In 1993, Accept reunited with Dirkschneider and released *Objection Overruled*, *Death Row* (1994), and *Predator* (1996). Despite the three new albums, Dirkschneider was ready to return to U.D.O.; once again, the band was on hiatus.

It took more than a decade of not accepting that the band would stay apart forever, and then, finally, in 2005, Accept’s classic line-up, sans Kaufmann, reunited for a brief European tour of metal festivals. The band was well received, but stated no further plans to the press.

Hoffman got together with his Baltes in 2009 to make some noise and let off some steam. Before long, they had a singer, Mark Tornillo, who had paid his dues in hard rock outfit TT Quick and was familiar with much of Accept’s back catalog.

The first song the new team laid into was “Balls to the Wall.” According to Hoffman, he and Baltes were impressed. “After 30 seconds Peter and I looked at each other,” Hoffman told one interviewer. “It was as if chains have been lifted from us. We loved the guy! When we finally departed that evening, sweaty and exhausted



Photograph by Christian Graus/bringbackglam.com

but utterly happy, we spontaneously wanted Accept back that second. I can only describe it as karma. Mark was asked if he could imagine restarting Accept with us.”

With Tornillo writing lyrics, the new line-up began songwriting together. In November 2009 when they entered Backstage Studio in Derbyshire, England, they had 30 new songs, which they played for producer and long-time fan Andy Sneap.

Sneap picked the new songs he liked best and urged the band to listen to their own records to remember what made the group unique. Hoffman, interviewed in *The Aquarian*, recalled, “Sometimes you forget these things when you don’t listen to your own stuff for many years, so it

was very good for us to do that. He was instrumental in picking the right type of songs. He was open to trying anything, even up till the last moment, if it would make the song better, no matter what the cost.”

The finished product is the critically well-received *Blood of Nations*, which was released on August 20, 2010, and debuted at No. 4 on the German Media Control Charts, their highest-charting debut ever. Several months prior, on May 21, 2010, Accept’s first single from the album, “Teutonic Terror,” hit No. 5 on the Myspace video charts and later

landed at No. 1 on the Myspace Global Metal Charts.

Just like the old days, the band took to the asphalt to support the album, starting with a sold-out show in New York City on May 8, 2010. One year later, they’re still going town to town and venue to venue, winning fan after fan, playing a hard-driving set of now-classic songs and material from the new album.

The fans’ reaction continues to be phenomenal. As one long-time believer wrote after seeing them play, “Their presence on the metal scene has been sorely missed.”

Accept’s course to be true to their unique vision has paid off again, four decades after they were first formed and 20 years after the MTV metal

years. They never succumbed to power ballads, overly slick and gimmicky videos, or attempts to cross over and capture part of Bon Jovi’s audience. They made, and continue to make the sort of albums fans don’t have to make excuses for. Accept is Heavy Metal. For more information on Accept, visit its official website at [www.acceptworldwide.com](http://www.acceptworldwide.com)



Photograph by Christian Graus/bringbackglam.com







Blonde Summer is (L-R): Matt Reid (guitar), Chris Livingstone (bass), Chris Pope (lead vocals/guitar), and Stephen Kurshner (drums).

# California Surf Music Returns

## ...and Blonde Summer is Riding the Wave

by *Thrust Magazine* Contributing Writer Angela LaManna

There used to be an open mic night at The Hideout in Santa Monica, California. Oh, you've never heard of it? Not surprising. It's a tiny hole-in-the-wall right off the Pacific Coast Highway, just north of town. The walls are dark, giving it a cozy, warm feel. The only people to wander in are usually townies and the friends of

the open mic performers. Every time the door opens, a breath of salty air envelops the room.

About a year ago, my friend was often playing at that open mic while working on some new material. I used to go now and again to enjoy the ocean air. One night, this band came in to play. There were four of them, and they were a tight fit in the

little corner that served as the stage. The drummer could barely squeeze in a tom and a hi-hat. As they were setting up, we regulars elbowed each other and asked, "Who are these guys?"

And then they started to play, and all got quiet.

It's not often that I would describe

a Los Angeles band as understated, but Blonde Summer is just that. That night at The Hideout, what grabbed me was how quiet, yet urgent, their music was. No, not quiet. Hushed. You could feel it two bars in, before singer Chris Pope even uttered a word. They sound sweetly sad, like the first cool night in October. There's an aching restraint in every

*Eleganza ...* sounds like a sun-soaked month at the beach, but it was really born in the desert. Reid and Pope took their collection of '60s surf rock and trekked to Joshua Tree. Their time there was spent in a little cabin, and the locals knew what they were working on was good long before the finishing polish. One afternoon, the pool guy heard them playing and was compelled to knock on the door, give them a handful of marijuana, and wish them the best of luck.

song, like a sixteen-year-old boy hopelessly in love with a girl he's sure he'll never have.

Blonde Summer has been around in some incarnation for almost 10 years. Pope is the creative force behind it. The little money his parents had set aside for his college tuition, he used to get started as a musician. He began by playing around L.A. as a solo acoustic performer and, after a while, decided he needed another guitar player to round out his sound.

He put an ad on the Internet and that's how he found Matt Reid. Pope learned years later that Reid was actually only 16-years old when they started playing together. Reid was afraid that Pope wouldn't want to play with a high school kid. But when he found out, Pope said that Reid was so good he wouldn't have cared about his age.

They've been playing together for 10 years, give or take, and that tight bond is the basis of their sound. Pope lays down the underlying structure, usually acoustically, and Reid adds his electric guitar over the top. The

lineup is rounded out by Chris Livingstone's bass, which is heavy but clean, that pushes every song along inconspicuously. But if you listen closely, you'll find that it's this bass rhythm that grounds Blonde Summer's music, making it more than mere wispy beach music.

Stephen Kurshner is a relatively new addition to the band on the drums. Pope felt like their former drummer had ambitions to make the band bigger than any of them were comfortable with. "He wanted to be Coldplay and I wanted to be just us ... just who we are. No more, no less," Pope said,

Once Kurshner joined the group, Pope felt ready to churn out some new songs. Their EP *Eleganza* was the product. It sounds like a sun-soaked month at the beach, but it was really born in the desert. Reid and Pope took their collection of '60s surf rock and trekked to Joshua Tree. Their time there was spent in a little cabin, and the locals knew what they were working on was good long before the finishing polish. One afternoon, the

pool guy heard them playing and was compelled to knock on the door, give them a handful of marijuana, and wish them the best of luck.

What they emerged with is five tracks steeped in poignancy, beauty, and longing. They've grown since that first time I saw them a year ago. Their songs have more structure without stepping into pop. I saw them at The Satellite a few weekends ago, and while they were loud and Kurshner is aggressive on the kit, there's still something more complex in their sound, something quiet just beneath the surface. You can't hear everything that's going on in one listen; it's not that straightforward. They're as layered as the air when you stand on the beach at twilight with the person you're hopelessly in love with before you know whether or not they love you back.

As the winter rains flood the streets, I turn on *Eleganza* and dream balmy summer dreams.

For more information on Blonde Summer, visit its official website at [www.blondesummer.com](http://www.blondesummer.com).



Photograph courtesy of Blonde Summer



# Vocalizing—Repetitive Singing Exercises Which Improve Your Quality—is not Stupid

By Thrust Magazine Senior Contributing Writer Al Koehn

Even though the top professionals consider vocalizing essential to their careers, many amateur singers feel that such activities are nonsense. “Why would I wasn’t to spend time singing stupid exercises when I could be singing songs?” If a football team felt that way, and spent all its time just playing the game, they definitely wouldn’t be on the winning list.

**V**ocalizing. Athletes do it, actors do it and if you are serious about your singing you need to do it also.

When athletes practice, most of their time is spent not playing the game. They are shooting 100 free throws, running through tires, hitting 300-foot five-iron shots at the driving range, doing pushups, etc. When professional singers practice, much of their time is spent not singing songs. They are singing exercises specifically designed to strengthen their voices, improve their quality and high range, expand breath control, and develop smooth vibratos.

Even though the top professionals consider vocalizing essential to their careers, many amateur singers feel that such activities are nonsense. “Why would I want to spend time singing stupid exercises when I could be singing songs?” If a football team felt that way, and spent all its time just playing the game, they definitely wouldn’t be on the winning list.

An effective vocal exercise program needs only 15-20 minutes each day (or as often as possible), and should include the following:

**1** A few minutes of light humming, using some five-note scales or a song like “frara jaka,” which is made up of little connected scales. Start your humming on a low pitch, and after you’ve sung the scale or

song once, try singing it a little higher in pitch. Do this for about three minutes, feeling your lips vibrate and feeling the sound buzzing up in your forehead. It should feel and sound nasal.

**2** Do the same scale or melody using vowels. Start with the “AH” vowel,

**4** Practice inhaling *into the belly* by lying on the floor with your hands over your navel, and taking six deep breaths. Stay relaxed, and don’t try too hard, and your belly will move up and down as you breathe in and out. Then stand up and try it. Do this often, and you will begin to normally inhale by expanding the belly instead of raising the chest and shoulders.

**5** Start singing a comfortably high note on an “AH.” Then slide down your entire voice until you reach your lowest note. Make sure this is a complete slide, not a series of steps or bumps. Then move up a little higher and try it again. When you need to go into your head voice or falsetto, go ahead. Just try to keep your sliding sound constant and smooth.

That’s it. Of course you can add your own variations and exercises, but these will help a lot. A good recorded singing course or a good teacher will expand on these in ways to help you even more.

I invite you to download my free ePub, which tells you about many important aspects of good singing. You can do this by going to [www.vocalvision.com](http://www.vocalvision.com).

Al Koehn is a world-renowned professional singing instructor with over 40 years experience.



moving to the “EE,” to the “O,” and the “EH,” and then the “AU.” This should take about five minutes. Try to sing with a very clear and bright sound which “feels” more in your head than in your throat. **Important:** Try to keep your throat open during all these exercises. It helps to breathe in like you are going to yawn.

**3** Work on your breathing by hissing through your teeth. You should use some light force on this. Don’t be lazy. As you repeat this, try to go longer and longer before running out of breath. Keep your chest high and don’t let it collapse



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Realizing that the name *Warren Brothers* sounded great for the Nashville scene, the non-secular siblings modified their sound and became a successful country-rock duo. They were signed to BNA Records and released their debut country album *Beautiful Day in the Cold Cruel World*, in 1997. They had six Top 40 country-chart singles, including "Guilty," "She Wants to Rock," and "Better Man," and their music videos received frequent airplay on the Country Music Television (CMT) cable network.

## WWJLT: What Would Jesus Listen To?

### Tampa's Christian Hard Rock and Metal Groups Find Their Blessings Among a Secular World

By Thrust Magazine Senior Contributing Writer John Urban



"The Last Word" author John Urban is flanked by Christian rockers, Country Music Television (CMT) reality-TV stars, and hit songwriters, the Warren Brothers. That's Brad on the left and Brett on the right.

During the hedonistic, debauchery-filled '80s music scene, a number of Christian metal bands, like Stryper and Holy Soldier, had the look and hooks to compete with the top secular bands of the day. Stryper toured with bands like Mötley Crüe and tried to save young head bangers with yellow-and-black spandex and throwing bible bombs into the pit. Holy Soldier, who had a style comparable to TNT and Whitesnake, were also represented by Stryper's management, DHM. (See my interview in the August 1990 issue of *Thrust Magazine*, which you can read online for free at [www.thrustmagazine.org](http://www.thrustmagazine.org).)

Even Tampa, Florida—world famous for its brutal death-metal—developed a Christian metal scene of its own, the best, in my opinion, being Scarlet and St. Warren. Both

bands have recently re-released CDs on indie label FnA Records. (The label also reissued CDs from '80s secular bands you might recall, including Tora Tora, Dirty Looks, and Black and Blue, featuring current Kiss lead guitarist Tommy Thayer.)

In 1983, Scarlet was founded as a studio project by vocalist and guitarist Jeff McDonald and bassist Ronnie Lewis. Having grown up learning from the best hard rock bands of the '70s like Kiss and UFO, McDonald sculpted Scarlet into a theatrical

band with a then-modern over-the-top glam image and a Christian message set to straight-forward hard rock music. Looking back at the vintage promotional glossies of the band, you could have taken any of its members and placed them into Poison or Mötley Crüe and they would have blended in.

In 1984, Scarlet recorded "Stop Runnin'," which won the grand prize in a Florida statewide songwriting contest, and netted the band a cool \$1,000 worth of recording studio time. The single hit big on national cable TV, coming in Fourth place in MTV's Basement Tapes contest. It also received airplay on local Christian radio.

Scarlet's third drummer, Jimmy Moore, recalls that being a Christian rock band had its unique set of challenges. "Most of



St. Warren, circa 1990. (L-R): Jimmy Moore, Brad Warren, Brett Warren, and Jeff McDonald.

our following were Christians and didn't like going to bars, and many were teenagers that were too young to get in," he says. "So we decided to put on our own shows. We rented the halls, booked opening bands, made the flyers, promoted the events, and made the tickets ... we did it all."

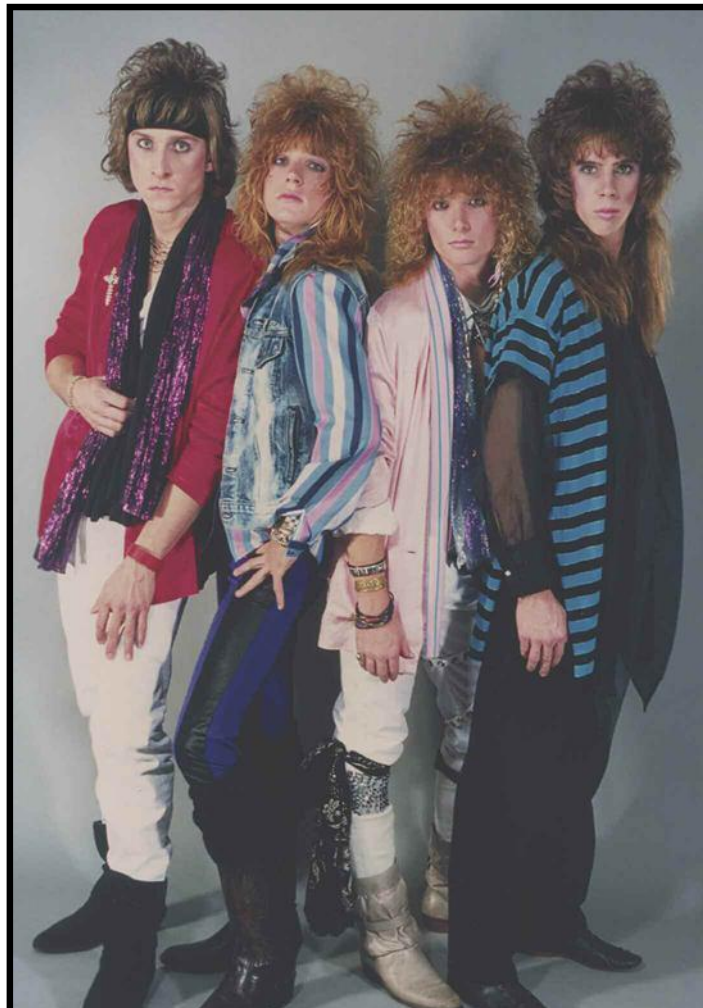
I recall going to see Scarlet at the Ritz Theatre in Ybor City, Florida. I was so impressed by their heaviest song, "I Declare War," that I financed them to record it at a Tampa studio, and produced it as well.

While McDonald had the chops to play lead guitar and front the band on vocals, he and the band decided to add a fourth member to free up from his many on-stage responsibilities and recruited young guitar prodigy Michael E. Flake for lead guitar. While McDonald had an Ace Frehley-style of '70s lead-lick playing, Flake added a wilder style of '80s Los Angeles-style flashy playing that took the band to the next level. While the band's "Stop Runnin'" and the its anthem "We're Gonna Rock" became staple songs in its live sets, Flake added his songwriting abilities, including one of my favorite songs by the band, "Lisa."

Scarlet disbanded in 1988. Lewis and Flake moved to Los Angeles, and McDonald and Moore hooked up with brothers Brett (then going by the name Brij) and Brad Warren (formerly of a Christian rock band called Eden Rock) and formed St. Warren, which remained true to its Christian rock beginnings. "I felt like a mentor and big brother to my comrades in Scarlet and St Warren," McDonald says. "...being one of the first Florida bands with a Christian message in a city world famous for death metal at the time. It was a blast!"

St. Warren released their self-produced first EP, *Honest Planet*, in 1990, which included "Only You," "Now is the Time," and new versions of Scarlet's "Lisa" and "Stop Runnin'." Despite some close calls with record labels interested in signing the group but wanting to change the band's name, direction and song writing, the Warren Brothers stuck to their guns and relocated to Nashville in 1995, after St. Warren disbanded.

Realizing that the name *Warren Brothers* sounded great for the Nashville scene, the non-secular sib-



Above: Christian rockers Scarlet, circa 1986. (L-R): Jeff McDonald, Mike Flake, Ronnie Lewis, and Jimmy Moore.



Jeff McDonald and the Warren Brothers take the stage for McDonald's birthday party concert in Tampa, Florida (March 2011) (L-R): Jeff McDonald and Brett Warren. (Photograph by the author.)

lings modified their sound and became a successful country-rock duo. They were signed to BNA Records and released their debut country album *Beautiful Day in the Cold Cruel World*, in 1997. They had six Top 40

country-chart singles, including "Guilty," "She Wants to Rock," and "Better Man," and their music videos received frequent airplay on the Country Music Television (CMT) cable network. That landed them the cov-

eted role of opening act on tour with Tim McGraw and Faith Hill in 1991.

Their debut was followed by more two albums, *King of Nothing*, and *Well Deserved Obscurity*. In all, they have scored Top 40 country music chart placement seven times.

The Warren Brothers became reality TV stars—judges on the *Nashville Star* cable show (2003), which was the country version of *American Idol*, and starred in their own reality show *Barely Famous*, for CMT. The series followed the brothers on the road and in the studio pursuing their fame and fortune.

The Warren Brothers began co-writing songs with McGraw and Hill, which strengthened the siblings' reputation of being some of the most sought after songwriters in country music. They've co-written hits for many of the genre's top artists including Martina McBride, Van Zant, and Lynyrd Skynyrd. They've also recently toured with Tim McGraw and performed with him during his live sets.

I knew the Warren Brothers on a professional level when I was a booking agent in Tampa, and reunited with them recently when they flew back to Tampa to perform in a Scarlet concert held to celebrate Jeff McDonald's birthday. Brett told me that Brad and he are currently retired from recording their own records as they are making more money co-writing hits for other signed bands. They "still right a lot of rock," Brett says, currently have finished songs for Chris Daughtry, and nine songs for an upcoming album by Hinder.

To find out more about Scarlet and St Warren, look for them on Myspace and order Scarlet's self-titled CD and St. Warrens CDs' *Rock of Eden* and *Return to Honest Planet* at [www.fnarecords.net](http://www.fnarecords.net).

I am pleased to report a follow up to my feature on Nasty Savage's reunion benefit for their drummer Curtis Beeson who was recovering from a brain cancer operation. Guitarist David Austin informed me that Curtis was just diagnosed as being cancer free! The "Kill the Cancer" benefit was an amazing success. It sold out, and between ticket sales and donated items being auctioned off, over \$10,000 was raised to go towards Curtis's medical bills.







I love Ze Scorpionzzzz, I say with my best attempt at a German accent. They're an awesome band, had great songs, kicked-ass live, and are really cool dudes.

I took this photograph at my first Scorpions show and I remember the details like it was yesterday. Matthias Jabs, one of the Scorpion's two lead guitarists, was playing one of his solos, and using all the cliché guitar licks, hammer-ons, bends, and pull-offs that made the '80s so much fun.

While in the midst of executing a volley of pull-offs, he turned his attention directly at me, knowing that I was close enough (about five feet from the stage) to see what he was doing, and how easy it really was for a professional like him. He raised his eyebrows,

smiled, and then went back to that *This is really hard* face he had been making before, which is when I clicked the shutter for this photo.

After the concert, my support team and I went back with the Scorpions to the Don Cesar Hotel in St. Petersburg, Florida, for an after-show blitzkrieg party.

Before we left the band for the night, they asked us to come and party with them the next night in Jacksonville, Florida. I had to shoot a different band the next night and couldn't accept the hard-rock band's invitation, but my photo assistant was crazy enough join them. That's a story for a future issue of *Thrust Magazine*.



Photograph by *Thrust Magazine* Senior Photographer Christopher Lee Helton

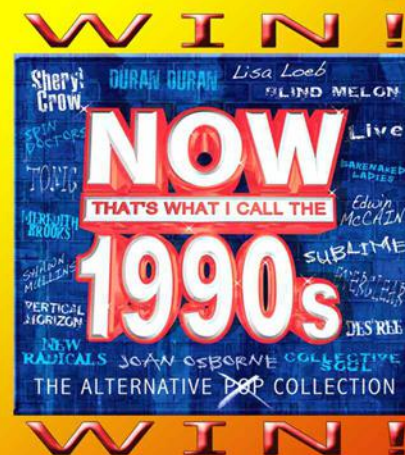




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Then, using any or all *Thrust*<sup>TM</sup> Magazine archive issues as your references, pick one band featured, mentioned, or advertised in the magazine that begins with the letter A. Do the same for the letters E, I, O, and U, so that you have picked five bands in *Thrust*<sup>TM</sup> Magazine, and each of them starts with a different vowel.

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